

**DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CHP Reports Women using Cellular 911 to Report Domestic Violence are leaving dispatchers in the dark**

A woman involved in a domestic dispute called 911 on a cellular phone, then set the phone down so the CHP dispatcher could listen to the altercation and send help. But help never came because the frustrated dispatcher had no way of identifying the caller, who had forgotten to give her name.

“It was a moment of sheer helplessness for us,” said CHP Commissioner Dwight Helmick, “because this was an emergency situation where we could have intervened. We want people to know that all cellular 911 calls come to the Highway Patrol, and that we will respond. Cellular 911 technology presently does not provide automatic identification of callers so we need the caller’s name and location.”

CHP dispatchers are on the job 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and a major responsibility is dealing with emergency 911 calls. Helmick said emphasis on 911 as a resource for women trapped in violent family confrontations is appropriate now because October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

“The Highway Patrol is joining with WEAVE (Women Escaping a Violent Environment) and the Cellular Carriers Association of California to focus on 911 as a potential safety net in these situations,” Helmick said. “We also want to reinforce the use of 911 for emergency calls only. Domestic violence certainly qualifies, but we still receive a great many calls that are not actual emergencies. We need to screen these out because they tie up 911 lines and block true emergency calls from getting through.”

M-O-R-E

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WEAVE representative Shireen Miles said the demand for domestic violence services from her agency continually increases. Even though the number of domestic violence cases dropped 7 percent from 1995 to 1996, restraining orders jumped 63 percent. (Twenty-four-hour crisis intervention, counseling and referral services are available through the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800 799-SAFE.

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